**the**

**literary**

**essay**

**a guide to the physical format, process, elements, mechanics, and evaluation of the English literary essay**

**Randolph Middle School, eighth grade, 2010-11**

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**“If your essay is your house, then the thesis is the foundation; the grammar and punctuation are the bricks, mortar, and shingles; your language is the architecture, paint, landscaping, and window dressing. Where do you live right now? Where do you *want* to live?”**

**Part I- The Physical Format of Your Essay**

Simply put: a neat, crisp paper makes you look smarter. I like to say that your essays speak for you. If they look sloppy, your reader will assume you are sloppy and not give as much credit to your ideas as you might expect. ***Make a good first impression***.

**FOR THE *FINAL DRAFT* OF YOUR PAPER:**

* Your paper should, physically, be **clean** and **crinkle- and crease-free**.
* Your paper should be typed in **size 12 font**, Times New Roman or other **readable font**. Do not use a font that is all caps or all lower case or that has odd-shaped letters and/or numbers. If you have any doubts about whether or not your typing meets these guidelines, do not use it.
* Your **entire paper** must be **double-spaced** (skipping lines)

The first page must contain the following, in order, ***double-spaced*** in the upper left of the first page of the paper:

**Name, date, teacher, class period**

The **title** of the paper must be below the above heading, **centered**, with major words starting with capitals. No quotation marks, underlining, italics, or all-caps!

Each page must be **numbered in the bottom center**.

A standard five-paragraph essay should be **no shorter than 500 words** and **no longer than 700 words**. Three *typed* pages or five *handwritten* pages is the maximum.

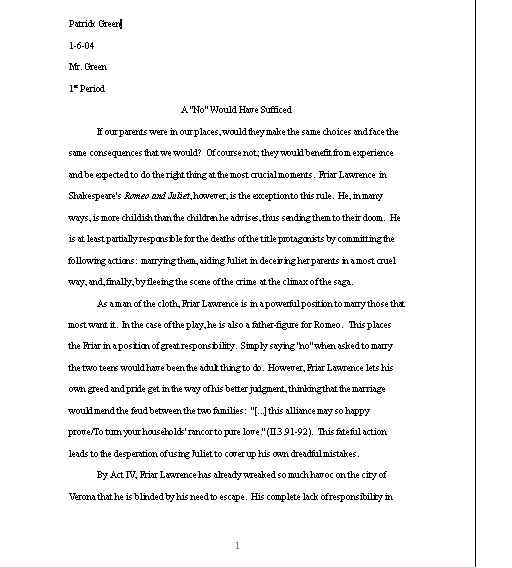
**IF YOU ARE *HANDWRITING* YOUR PAPER**

***IF YOU ARE HAND-WRITING YOUR PAPER, ALL THE GUIDELINES STILL APPLY EXCEPT FOR THE FOLLOWING:***

* **Your heading (Name, Date, Teacher, Class Period) should be single spaced in the upper left corner of loose-leaf paper in the blank area. Your title should be centered on the first line of the loose-leaf paper.**
* **You must only write on the *front* of your loose-leaf paper for your final draft.**
* **You must stay within the red margins on both sides of the paper.**

**EVERY OTHER RULE APPLIES, INCLUDING DOUBLE-SPACING AND PAGE NUMBERING!**

The following is an example of the proper format for the first page of a typed essay:



**All other pages of the paper must start at the top of the page, with each page numbered (see example essay at end of booklet)**.

**Part II- The Process: Where to Start, Where to End**

**A.** The first thing you must do when beginning your literary analysis is **identify the question**.

* This identification starts from *broad to narrow.* For instance, you must first identify the following, using Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example:

**Broad topic**: The role of ***racism*** in *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

**Narrow topics**: Is the town of Maycomb ***racist***?

Is Aunt Alexandra ***racist***?

How did ***racism*** contribute to the injustice of the conviction of Tom

Robinson?

* Here’s another example, using Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*:

**Broad topic**: The role of ***greed*** in *The Martian Chronicles.*

**Narrow topics**: Which characters are the most ***greedy*** in the novel?

Which characters are ***greedy***, and which are not?

How does ***greed*** contribute to the downfall of the Martian race?

* **Broad topics** are identified by their **generality and universality**. They are **thematic in nature** and can be applied to many areas of the work being studied.
* **Narrow topics** are identified by their **specificity** to the characters and events in the work being analyzed.

The process of moving from the *broad topic* to the *narrow topic* is, arguably, the most important part of the writing process, because ***it is the first crucial step***.

**B.** The second step is to **formulate a thesis statement**. This statement is generated out of one of the narrow topics and require an **opinionated, argumentative response**.

* Your goal: To form an argument that **goes beyond mere plot summary** or the simple recounting of essential facts from the work being analyzed.
* The official term for a written argument that rises above basic factual summary (the book report) is a **thesis**, and a thesis is a claim that is advanced through argumentation.

Why is it important that you “make a claim”? Why not just present an explanation of what happened in the book, story, or poem and let your reader draw his/her own conclusions? Simple: Your ***audience*** (teacher, fellow students) already have a basic knowledge of the material. **It is your job to present to them an *original insight* or *claim***.

**Here’s a “real world” example of the role of the thesis:**

If you and a friend were to go out to the same movie, it would be both boring and annoying if your discussion of the film afterward consisted of nothing more than repeating each plot twist. ***Rather than just saying that the main character received an interesting gold ring with an inscription on it, you might discuss the ways in which being given the epic task of destroying the ring caused the main character to change in some way and whether or not the filmmaker and actors were effective at conveying this information***. This type of conversation gets to the heart of what the movie is *truly* about and goes way beyond the obvious. Also, there is no dispute that the main character received the ring, but *arguments can be made about how the character developed because of it.*

***The same principles apply in a paper***. When you are in the process of writing, you must constantly ask yourself, “Am I going beyond the facts or am I simply describing what I have read?” You may not come up with a completely original idea, but you still might be able to tell your reader something new rather than repeating something to them that they already know.

**The importance of the thesis statement:**

Like the foundation of a house, ***the thesis is the foundation of your paper***. It needs to be well-constructed and sound, and it will give focus and clarity to your writing. A weak thesis statement will make your paper shaky and eventually cause the entire argument to crumble like a house of cards.

**Constructing a thesis statement:** We will use an analysis of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as our example.

Your thesis statement should be **one sentence** that makes your argument and lists **three areas** that you will detail to prove your argument:

* Broad topic: **Racism**
* Narrow topic: In *To Kill a Mockingbird,* is the town of Maycomb **racist**?
* Thesis statement: **Racism** in the town of Maycomb is illustrated in the characters of *Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather*.

Notice that the thesis statement ***answers the narrow topic question*** and lists three areas (Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Meriweather) to use as examples to prove your argument.

**C. The Outline**

Before you begin actually writing the essay, you must outline, graphically, your writing. This will become your roadmap.

It looks like this:

**Narrow Topic Question**

**Thesis: The argument you wish to prove (the *answer* to the above question)**

**Three key areas of evidence to advance your argument**

**(topics of your three body paragraphs)**

**Topic Sentence #3**

**Topic Sentence #2**

**Topic Sentence #1**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Conclusion**

**(restatement of your thesis)**

Using the chosen thesis example (racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), your graphic outline would look something like this:

**Narrow Topic Question: Is the town of Maycomb racist?**

**Thesis:** Racism in the town of Maycomb is illustrated in the characters of Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather.

**Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather**

**Miss Merriweather is a racist**

**Walter Cunningham is a racist**

**Bob Ewell is a racist**

**Quote pp. 153**

**Quote p. 232**

**Quote pp. 172-173**

**Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather are clear illustrations of the racism of Maycomb.**

**D. The Rough Draft**

The rough draft is the ***first attempt at your essay***. Do not concern yourself with structure, grammar, spelling, spacing, or neatness on the rough draft. The rough draft ***must be handwritten in your composition notebook!***

**E. The First Draft**

The first draft should be ***your first attempt at organizing and cleaning up your essay***. This draft should ***look like your final draft***. You have double-spaced it, added your heading and title, and you should have taken care to clean up your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. This draft will be peer or teacher edited.

**F. The Final Draft**

The final draft is the final ***paper to be turned in for evaluation***. It should be proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation; formatted with double-spacing, heading, title, and page numbers; and ready to be graded. We will discuss later in this booklet the criteria for evaluating and grading papers.

**A note about the use of 1st person in your paper:**

You must ***avoid using first person*** when you state your argument. **A thesis is an opinion stated as fact**. Therefore, using “I think” or “in my opinion” or “I believe” is completely unnecessary. The simple fact that your name appears on the paper itself indicates that it is your opinion. Some students think that eliminating “I think” or “I believe” makes them seem arrogant or overconfident. In reality, people do not react to a writer’s work in this way, and it is understood that opinions need to be stated clearly and forcefully. ***Unless I tell you that this is a “personal essay,” you will write only in the third person present tense.***

Part III- Elements: Introduction, Body, Using and Citing Quotes, and Conclusion

A**. The Introduction**

The introduction should contain at least four sentences:

1) **Opening sentence**(s): to grab your reader’s attention and introduce the universal idea you are exploring (one to three sentences) To grab the reader’s attention, you may use exaggeration, a provacative quote, or simply a bold, opinionated statement

2) A sentence to **connect your universal idea to the material** you are writing about

3) An introduction to the evidence (**author and title of the book**, story, or poem)

4) Your **thesis** statement (**this should be the last sentence of your introduction!)**

Graphically, your introduction should look like an **inverted pyramid**, going from ***broad (universal) to narrow (how that universal idea is connected to the book, story, or poem you are writing about)***:

Attention grabber; universal idea

Connecting sentence

Introduction to the

evidence

Thesis statement

**Example (from an essay on William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*):**

**Power: What so many human beings try to obtain. Men kill to obtain it; they**

**plow through loved ones, doing whatever they can to get to it. Once a position of**

**power is obtained, men attempt to play god for others that they perceive to be lower**

**beings. They accomplish this by controlling their lives, for minutes or even for years.**

**William Shakespeare illustrates this passion for power in his play *The Tempest*.**

**Prospero, the old duke of Milan, plays god on the island where he is trapped by**

**controlling the weather, by leading the nobles unknowingly to him, and by watching**

**and controlling their evil plots.**

**IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION:**

1) **Nothing** about the specifics of the book, story, or poem, including title and author, should be mentioned at all in the first one or two sentences. **Keep it *universal*!**

2) The **title and author** of the work ***must*** be mentioned in the introduction.

3) **The thesis statement is always the last sentence of the introduction**, with **three points** clearly contained within it.

**B. The Body Paragraphs**

Each body paragraph should be a ***minimum*** of **five sentences** long:

1) Each body paragraph has an opening ***topic sentence*** that communicates the **main point from your thesis** statement to be discussed.

2) At least one sentence that **sets up the quote** from the text that you will use to illustrate your point.

3) A **quote from the text** and an explanation of its relevance.

4) A **transition statement** taking the reader from the point you just made to the point you will make next (does not apply to your third body paragraph) ***See example essay at end of booklet! Look at final sentences of the first two body paragraphs: These are transition sentences!***

What makes the body paragraphs crucial is that they are the parts of the paper where you **develop your thesis**. You provide evidence and specifically argue your point, using **the text as your main source of that evidence**. **PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 24 (SAMPLE ESSAY) TO SEE HOW THESIS POINTS ARE DEVELOPED IN EACH BODY PARAGRAPH**

**C. Using and Citing Quotes**

***Every body paragraph should contain at least one quote that supports your argument***. The quote must be from the text you are analyzing and must be **relevant** to the argument you are making.

The rules and guidelines for using quotes are different for all the ***different types of literature***. The following is a rundown:

**FOR FICTION OR NONFICTION TEXTS**

**1) The page number the quote appears on should appear in parentheses immediately following the quote**:

Example (from *To Kill a Mockingbird)*:

Lee expresses her feelings about Maycomb by calling it "a tired old

town when I first knew it." (5)

**2) When quoting a character within the text, you should remember the rules for *quotes within quotes***:

Example (from *To Kill a Mockingbird*):

Harper Lee illustrates Jem's growing maturity: "Jem brushed his hair

back to get a better look. 'Why don't you come over, Charles Baker Harris?' he

said." (7)

**3) When using a quote that consists of *three or more lines*, use what is called an *inset quote* to cite it. There are no quotation marks needed for this, but you still need to note the page number**:

Example (from a George Orwell novel):

The reality of life in the world horrifies the Savage:

He woke once more to external reality, looked

round him, knew what he saw—knew it, with

a sinking sense of horror and disgust, for the

recurrent delirium of his days and nights, the

nightmare of swarming indistiguishable sameness. (215)

**FOR POETRY AND SHAKESPEAREAN VERSE**

**1) When quoting poetry, for a *small citation*, *show where the lines end with slashes* and capital letters at the beginnings of lines. *Line numbers should follow in parentheses***:

Example (from a Robert Frost poem):

Metaphorically describing a pile of leaves as a snake, Robert

Frost sees nature as threatening: "Out in the porch's sagging

floor / Leaves got up in a coil and hissed, / Blindly struck at my

knee and missed" (8-10).

**2) For *Shakespearean quotes*, instead of lines, *use a Line Reference*, which cites the act, scene, and line(s):** For act I, scene 5, lines 182-184:

**(I.v.182-184)**

**3) For *longer poetic citations* (four or more lines), use *inset quotes* and write it *exactly as it was originally written (including all punctuation, spellings, and line endings)****:*

Example (from William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*):

Macbeth expresses his final despair with a theatre metaphor:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

The struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury

Signifying nothing. (V.v.24-28)

**FOR *ALL* TYPES OF TEXTS**

**4) *When quoting either poetry, Shakespeare, or prose*, use an *ellipsis with brackets* to indicate the sentence you are quoting continues *beyond the end of the quotation or to show omission of material that you don't want to use***:

Example (from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*):

Banquo questions the intentions of the witches: "And

oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness

tell us truths [...]" (I.3.123-4)

Example (from a George Orwell novel):

By shooting the elephant, Orwell's hero satisfies the Burmese

natives: "When I pulled the trigger [...] I heard the devilish roar of

glee that went up from the crowd" (154).

**What to Always Remember When Using Quotes**

1) Always make sure that you *properly cite where the quote came from in* ***parentheses*.**

2) Be careful with your punctuation. Note in the examples above where I used ***colons*** and where I used ***commas*** before the quote. ***Rule of thumb***: Use *commas* before quotes that are preceded by verbs (such as “says” or “states” or “asks,” etc.), and use *colons* before quotes that are preceded by nouns (such as “metaphor” and “natives” in the examples above)

**D. The Conclusion**

Your conclusion should be a minimum of **four sentences** long and should contain the following:

1) A **restatement** of your thesis. This should be a ***new construction of your thesis*** statement, ***not a verbatim repetition***. ***THIS IS THE FIRST SENTENCE OF YOUR CONCLUSION!.***

2) A general summary of what you explained in your body paragraphs and how they apply to the thesis.

3) A connection from the specifics of your thesis to the more broad, universal idea introduced in the first sentence of your introduction.

4) A **final, memorable, *universal*** statement illustrating the importance of your argument.

**In other words, your conclusion should be a *mirror image of your introduction*, in structure. It should look like a regular pyramid, with your ideas moving from *narrow (related to the text)* to *broad (universal)*:**

Restate Thesis

General Summary

Connection from

Specific to Broad Idea

Final, Memorable, Universal

Statement

**WHAT TO ALWAYS REMEMBER WITH YOUR CONCLUSION:**

1) **Never**, ***ever*** use the words **“In conclusion”** or **“Finally” or any words of that nature** in your conclusion.

2) Be sure to ***restate*** your thesis, ***not repeat*** it!

3) Your ***final sentence(s)*** should not even mention the work you are discussing (it should only discuss the importance of the ***universal theme***)

**Part IV- Mechanics: Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling**

This section is pretty self-explanatory. You should always be working on ***perfecting all these areas*** and either **looking up answers** or **asking your teacher for help** if unsure how to say what you want to say.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER REGARDING MECHANICS:**

1) All essays are to be written in the ***3rd person point of view*.**

2) All essays are to be written in the ***present tense***, except when referring to *historical* information.

3) All titles ***of books or plays are to be italicized when typed (they should be underlined*** ***when handwritten)***. All ***titles of poems, short stories, and chapters are to be written in quotes.***

4) You should ***never use contractions*** in an essay.

5) **Run-on sentences, fragments,** and **awkward wording will kill an essay**.

6) Because the rules of spelling and punctuation are pretty clear-cut, there really is **no excuse for careless errors** in these areas. You should always make it a point, in all your writing, to **always seek perfection** in these areas.

**Part V- Evaluation: Editing and Grading**

Because each writer has a different style and approach, each essay must be looked at in certain areas by the teacher ***subjectively***. This means that, apart from mechanics, clarity, structure, and coherence, the ***content and writing style of each essay is going to be different, just as each student is different***. Every writer has their own style and point of view. Ultimately, how effectively and interestingly you make your argument, the more likely you are to receive a higher grade. But, **if your writing is plagued by grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors, it won’t matter how great your *argument* is**; an unreadable paper is a poor paper.

**A. Editing**

I will be using the following editing marks on your papers:

\_\_\_\_\_ Italicize (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, ***not*** To Kill a Mockingbird)

\_\_\_\_\_ Author and Title (“*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee”, ***not*** “the book”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert comma

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert period

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert question mark

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert double quotation mark

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert single quotation mark or apostrophe

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert semi-colon

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert colon

\_\_\_\_\_ Strike (“After Jem leaves the courtroom, he he makes a tough decision.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Capitalize/make lower case (*To Kill a mockingbird*; Jem’s Father Atticus)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not bold (The Racism of Maycomb, ***not*** **The Racism of Maycomb**)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not underline (The Racism of Maycomb, ***not*** The Racism of Maycomb)

­\_\_\_\_\_ Fragment (“Atticus is a hero. A good father. He is also a good friend”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Run-on (“Atticus is a hero, a good father, he is also a good friend”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert apostrophe (“Scouts brother is named Jem.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Incorrect verb tense (“Scout and Jem are disillusioned,” ***not* “**Scout and Jem were

disillusioned.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Spelling error (“Scout’s bruther is named Jem.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Fuse words(*To Kill a Mocking Bird*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Disconnect words (“Dill puts alot of his imagination to good use.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Wordy; obviously trying to pad the essay; idea could be more concisely expressed

\_\_\_\_\_ Awkward, stilted, or confusing phrasing; not sure what you mean

\_\_\_\_\_Transpose (“At the end of the story, he gives in finally.”)

\_\_\_\_\_Add hyphen (“His sister is 6 years old.”)

\_\_\_\_\_Good point!

\_\_\_\_\_Great point!

In addition, pay close attention to **comments in the margins**.

**B. The Grading Rubric**

The following is the chart that graphs, generally, how a paper is finally evaluated:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic Development  *The overall effect of the paper from beginning to end* | Organiza-tion *How well it's focused and logically ordered (intro, transitions, thesis, body paragraphs conclusion)* | Support *The proper use of examples to support the main points of the thesis* | **Sentence** Structure *Sentences are complete and use correct grammar (no run-ons, fragments, s/v agreement, etc...). They are also varied in length and structure.* | Word Choice *Vocabulary, choice of words, and correct usage of words* | Mechanics *Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization*. |
| **"A+" Paper** | -Richly developed  -Original point of view  -Insightful and imaginative | -Carefully organized from beginning to end  -Clear focus  -Logical order | -Full, rich supporting details  -Details are relevant and appropriate | -Sentence variety enhances style  -No errors in structure or usage  -Sophisticated sentence patterns used successfully | -Rich, effective vocabulary  -Vivid language  -Correct usage | -Very few or no mechanical errors |
| **"A"-**  **"A-" Paper** | -Fluent, fully developed  -Clear awareness of task  -Evidence of originality in point of view  -Solid | Organized from beginning to end  -Clear focus  -Logical order | -Details strong, but lacking richness  -Details are relevant and appropriate | -Sentence variety is appropriate  -Few errors in structure or usage  -Moderate success with sophisticated sentences | -Effective vocabulary  -Generally successful with vivid language  -Generally correct usage | -Few or no mechanical errors |
| "B" Paper | -Moderately fluent  -Awareness of task  -Ideas limited in depth | -Organized, but with minor lapses in order or structure  -Focused | -Details are adequate to support thesis  -Details generally relevant and appropriate | -Some sentence variety  -Some errors in structure or usage  -Attempts to use more sophisticated structure not totally successful | -Acceptable vocabulary  -Attempts to use rich language  -Generally correct usage  -Dishonest use of big words | -Some mechanical errors that do not interfere with communication |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **"C" Paper** | -Thinly developed  -Some awareness of task  -Unclear | -Focus unclear or limited  -Poor transitions  -Shift in point of view  -Lacks real  conclusion | -Details lack follow-through  -Some details don't support thesis  -Important details missing | -Little sentence variety  -Errors in sentence structure  -Too many simple or repetitive constructions | -Simplistic vocabulary with very little word choice  -Noticeable errors in usage | -Some mechanical errors that do interfere with meaning  -Too many mechanical errors that cause problems for the reader |
| "D" Paper | -Poorly developed  -Poor awareness of task  -Unclear | -Unfocused  -Thought patterns difficult to follow  -Shift in point of view  -Resembles freewriting  -No conclusion | -Details merely listed, not supported  -Repetitive details  -Too few details | -No sentence variety  -Serious errors in structure or usage | -Simplistic vocabulary with inappropriate or incorrect word choice  -Numerous usage errors | -Noticeable mechanical errors that interfere with communication  -Errors cause major problems for the reader |
| "F" Paper | -Not developed  -No awareness of task  -Unclear | -So short or muddled that it completely lacks focus | -Virtually no details  -Details that are there are irrelevant | -Lack of sentence sense  -Riddled with errors  -Too brief to be deemed acceptable | -Inadequate vocabulary  -Too brief to evaluate | -Mechanical errors seriously interfere with communication |

**Part VI: Peer Editing Review Sheet for the 5-Paragraph Essay**

Writer of essay\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Reader of essay \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Format:** Is the essay ***double-spaced throughout***? Yes No

Is the heading correct (name, date, teacher, period)? Yes No

Is there an ***original*** title? Yes No

**The Introduction:** Please *write out* the ***three points points*** of the thesis statement here:

Is the thesis the ***last*** statement of the introduction paragraph? Yes No

Is the thesis a *provable* argument? Is it specific? Yes No

Is the thesis statement clear and easy to understand? Yes No

If you answered “No” to *any* of the previous 3 questions, what ***changes*** to the thesis do you recommend?

Does the introduction include the ***author and title of the work(s)?*** Yes No

If no, ***circle*** the information that is missing: author title of the work

Does the introduction provide information about the work, ***moving from general, universal information to the specific topic (thesis) of the essay (does it use the “Hourglass Method”)?***

Yes No

Does the introduction contain **at least 4 sentences**? Yes No

Is it ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

If *no*, please *circle* where you see the error. ***DO NOT CORRECT THE ERROR FOR THEM!***

**First Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the first point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the first point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the first point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does this body paragraph contain **at least 5 or 6 sentences**? Yes No

Is ***each sentence connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this body paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

Is the ***last sentence*** of this body paragraph a ***transition sentence*** that concludes the first thesis point and introduces the second thesis point? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have?

**Second Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the second point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the second point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the second point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does this body paragraph contain ***at least 5 or 6 sentences***? Yes No

Is ***each sentence connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this body paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

Is the ***last sentence*** of this body paragraph a ***transition sentence*** that concludes the first thesis point and introduces the second thesis point? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have?

**Third Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the third point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the third point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the third point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does the body paragraph contain ***at least 5 or 6 sentences***? Yes No

Is ***each sentence of this body paragraph connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have?

# Conclusion

Does the conclusion ***begin with a restatement of the thesis***? Yes No

Does the conclusion ***end on a universal note***? Does it leave you with a ***final, memorable, universal thought***?

Yes No

If *no*, what suggestion(s) do you have?

Is the conclusion ***free of grammatical and spelling errors***? Yes No

If *no*, please *circle* where you see the error. ***DO NOT CORRECT THE ERROR FOR THEM!***

## **Documentation of quotes**

Are ***quotations*** in the essay documented with ***page or line numbers in parentheses*** after each one?

Yes No

# Overall:

Are the ***verb tenses*** of the essay consistently ***present tense***? Yes No

Is the essay ***free of 1st (I, me, we, us, etc.) and 2nd person (you, your, you’re, etc.) references***? Yes No

Is the essay ***free of contractions*** (don’t, can’t, won’t, wouldn’t, etc.)? Yes No

# Does the essay follow the directions of the assignment? Yes No

If not, what needs to be done so that the essay satisfies the requirements of the assignment (examples: reduce plot summary, more details, correct the form, etc.)?

# What are the *best points of the draft you have read* (examples: good word choice, strong thesis, good use of details, perfect spelling, etc.)? YOU MUST WRITE *AT LEAST ONE GOOD POINT!*

What ***other improvements*** would you suggest?

Sample Essay

Patrick Green

1-6-04

Note the double-spacing *throughout* as well as the *original* title with no bolding, italicizing, or underlining

Mr. Green

1st Period

A "No" Would Have Sufficed

If our parents were now in our places, would they make the same choices and face the same consequences that we do? Of course not; they would benefit from experience and be expected to do the right thing at the most crucial moments. Friar Lawrence in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, however, is the exception to this rule. He is, in many ways, more childish than the children he advises, thus sending them to their doom. **He is at least partially responsible for the deaths of the title protagonists by committing the following actions: *marrying them*, *aiding Juliet in deceiving her parents in a most cruel way*, and, finally, *by fleeing the scene of the crime at the climax of the saga*.**

Note the *thesis statement* with *three clear points*. This is the *last sentence of the introduction.*

As a man of the cloth, Friar Lawrence is in a powerful position to marry those that most want to be wed. In the case of the play, he is also a father-figure for Romeo. This places the Friar in a position of great responsibility. Simply saying "no" when asked to marry the two teens would have been the adult thing to do. However, Friar Lawrence lets his own greed and pride get in the way of his better judgment, thinking that the marriage would mend the feud between the two families: "[...] this alliance may so happy prove/To turn your households' rancor to pure love." (II.iii.91-92) ***This fateful action* leads to *the desperation of using Juliet to cover up his own dreadful mistakes.***

Note the *transition statement* that leads the reader from the first thesis point to the next thesis point.

By act four, Friar Lawrence has already wreaked so much havoc on the city of Verona that he is blinded by his need to escape. His complete lack of responsibility in the past are not mistakes from which he has learned anything, however. No, in fact, he only exacerbates the situation when he agrees to help Juliet deceive her parents by giving her a medicine that will give her the appearance of death: This plan "craves as desperate an execution/As that is desperate which we would prevent." (IV.i.69-70) This utterly immature, dangerous, and immoral action is the first domino in a long line that eventually terminates with the deaths of our heroes. **Nevertheless, even when the Friar is given one final opportunity to do the right thing, he seals their deaths by running like a child caught with his hand in a cookie jar.**

Note the *transition statement* that leads the reader from the *second thesis point* to the *third thesis point.*

In act five, Friar Lawrence is confident that his plan will work. However, he fails to foresee the possibilities that might lead to the plan running off track. When his letter to Romeo is misdirected, the Friar seems confused and, of course, becomes desperate once again. The reader, by this time, should have no trouble predicting how he will proceed at this point: I will "keep her at my cell till Romeo come--/Poor living corse, clos'd in a dead man's tomb!" (V.iii.29-30) He reaches the tomb too late and, upon hearing some noise, instead of taking Juliet with him and saving at least one life, he runs like a scared kitten, leaving Juliet to discover Romeo's lifeless form and commit suicide. Surely, the Friar, like any reasonably intelligent person, could have seen that she might commit such an act! No. By act 5, the reader has become accustomed to such cowardice and lack of common sense.

**Friar Lawrence makes three crucial, deadly mistakes: Marrying Romeo and Juliet, planning Juliet's deceit, and fleeing when the young lovers need him the most**. His irresponsibility is vital, however, to the themes of the play. Without him, there is no one to give the heroes credibility and respectability. He is the lone adult figure that consistently provides them the support they feel they need. That support, however, proves to be too much. Anyone in Friar Lawrence's position would be well-advised to follow his own advice to Romeo at the end of act two, scene three: "Wisely and slow," he says, "they stumble that run fast." (94)

Note the *restatement of the thesis* (NOT a repetition of the thesis) as the *first sentence of the conclusion.*

**NOTES**